

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF MAINE

IN THE MATTER OF THE SEARCH OF
INFORMATION ASSOCIATED WITH
THE GOOGLE ACCOUNT
STRBOBO5277@GMAIL.COM THAT IS
STORED AT PREMISES CONTROLLED
BY GOOGLE

Case No. 2:24-mj-304-KFW

Filed Under Seal

**AFFIDAVIT IN SUPPORT OF
AN APPLICATION FOR A SEARCH WARRANT**

I, David Fife, being first duly sworn, hereby depose and state as follows:

INTRODUCTION AND AGENT BACKGROUND

1. I make this affidavit in support of an application for a search warrant for information associated with strbobo5277@gmail.com (the “Account”) that is stored at premises owned, maintained, controlled, or operated by Google LLC (“Google”), an electronic communications service and/or remote computing service provider headquartered at 1600 Amphitheater Parkway, Mountain View, California. The information to be searched is described in the following paragraphs and in Attachment A. This affidavit is made in support of an application for a search warrant under 18 U.S.C. §§ 2703(a), 2703(b)(1)(A) and 2703(c)(1)(A) to require Google to disclose to the government copies of the information (including the content of communications) further described in Section I of Attachment B. Upon receipt of the information described in Section I of Attachment B, government-authorized persons will review that information to locate the items described in Section II of Attachment B.

2. I am a Special Agent (SA) with Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and have been since August 2009. I am currently assigned to HSI’s Portland, Maine

office. I have participated in numerous criminal investigations, to include matters involving the sexual exploitation of children. In my career I have utilized various investigative tools and techniques to include the use of search warrants.

3. This affidavit is intended to provide the facts necessary for a determination of probable cause for the requested search warrant. The facts set forth in this affidavit are based on my personal knowledge, information obtained during my participation in this investigation, information from others, including law enforcement officers, my review of documents and computer records related to this investigation, and information gained through my training and experience.

4. Based on my training and experience and the facts as set forth in this affidavit, there is probable cause to believe that violations of Possession of Child Pornography, in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 2252(a)(a)(5)(B) and (b)(2) and 2256(8)(A) and Criminal Contempt, in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 401 and 3148 have been committed by Sheldon Rembert. There is also probable cause to search the information described in Attachment A for evidence, contraband, and instrumentalities of these crimes further described in Attachment B.

JURISDICTION

5. This Court has jurisdiction to issue the requested warrant because it is “a court of competent jurisdiction” as defined by 18 U.S.C. § 2711. 18 U.S.C. §§ 2703(a), (b)(1)(A), & (c)(1)(A). Specifically, the Court is “a district court of the United States . . . that has jurisdiction over the offense being investigated.” 18 U.S.C. § 2711(3)(A)(i).]

PROBABLE CAUSE

6. On September 18, 2024, I applied for a Search Warrant for information associated with the Google Account strbobo5722@gmail.com (the “September 18 Google Warrant”, after which the Court issued the Search Warrant. *See In the Matter of the Search of Information Associated with the Google Account strbobo5722@gmail.com Stored at Google*, No. 2:24-mj-288-KFW.

7. I served a copy of the Warrant on Google LLC, after which I received a response from Google that no account had been identified for strbobo5722@gmail.com. I then discovered that my affidavits submitted in support of the Samsung Warrant and the September 18 Google Warrant, and the September 18 Google Warrant and Application contained a transcription error in that relevant Google Account identifier observed in Rembert’s Samsung Galaxy S22 Ultra was in fact, strbobo5277@gmail.com. I am therefore submitting this application and affidavit for a new Search Warrant, for information associated with the correct account identifier.

8. I have attached hereto and incorporate herein my affidavit submitted in support of a search warrant for a Samsung Galaxy S22 Ultra (the “Samsung Warrant”). *See in the Matter of the Search of a Samsung Galaxy S22 Ultra*, No. 2:24-mj-287-KFW. The facts contained in that affidavit, along with the additional facts set forth herein, provide probable cause to search the Account for the evidence, contraband, and instrumentalities further described in Attachment B. I reassert the facts contained in my affidavit submitted in support of the Samsung Warrant, with the correction that the affidavit should have identified the relevant Google Account identifier as strbobo5277@gmail.com.

9. A preservation request for *strbobo5277@gmail.com* was provided to Google on May 22, 2024.

BACKGROUND CONCERNING GOOGLE¹

10. Google is a United States company that offers to the public through its Google Accounts a variety of online services, including email, cloud storage, digital payments, and productivity applications, which can be accessed through a web browser or mobile applications. Google also offers to anyone, whether or not they have a Google Account, a free web browser called Google Chrome, a free search engine called Google Search, a free video streaming site called YouTube, a free mapping service called Google Maps, and a free traffic tracking service called Waze. Many of these free services offer additional functionality if the user signs into their Google Account.

11. In addition, Google offers an operating system (“OS”) for mobile devices, including cellular phones, known as Android. Google also sells devices, including laptops, mobile phones, tablets, smart speakers, security cameras, and wireless routers. Users of Android and Google devices are prompted to connect their device to a Google Account when they first turn on the device, and a Google Account is required for certain functionalities on these devices.

¹ The information in this section is based on information published by Google on its public websites, including, but not limited to, the following webpages: the “Google legal policy and products” page available to registered law enforcement at lens.google.com; product pages on support.google.com; or product pages on about.google.com.

12. Signing up for a Google Account automatically generates an email address at the domain gmail.com. That email address will be the log-in username for access to the Google Account.

13. Google advertises its services as “One Account. All of Google working for you.” Once logged into a Google Account, a user can connect to Google’s full suite of services offered to the general public, described in further detail below. In addition, Google keeps certain records indicating ownership and usage of the Google Account across services, described further after the description of services below.

- a. **GMAIL:** Google provides email services (called Gmail) to Google Accounts through email addresses at gmail.com or enterprise email addresses hosted by Google. Gmail can be accessed through a web browser or a mobile application. Additional email addresses (“recovery,” “secondary,” “forwarding,” or “alternate” email addresses) can be associated with the Google Account by the user. Google preserves emails associated with a Google Account indefinitely, unless the user deletes them.
- b. **Contacts:** Google provides an address book for Google Accounts through Google Contacts. Google Contacts stores contacts the user affirmatively adds to the address book, as well as contacts the user has interacted with in Google products. Google Contacts can store up to 25,000 contacts. Users can send messages to more than one contact at a time by manually creating a group within Google Contacts or communicate with an email distribution list called a Google Group. Users have the option to sync their

Android mobile phone or device address book with their account so it is stored in Google Contacts. Google preserves contacts indefinitely, unless the user deletes them. Contacts can be accessed from the same browser window as other Google products like Gmail and Calendar.

- c. **Messaging:** Google provides several messaging services including Duo, Messages, Hangouts, Meet, and Chat. These services enable real-time text, voice, and/or video communications through browsers and mobile applications, and also allow users to send and receive text messages, videos, photos, locations, links, and contacts. Google may retain a user's messages if the user hasn't disabled that feature or deleted the messages, though other factors may also impact retention. Google does not retain Duo voice calls, though it may retain video or voicemail messages.
- d. **Google Drive:** Google Drive is a cloud storage service automatically created for each Google Account. Users can store an unlimited number of documents created by Google productivity applications like Google Docs (Google's word processor), Google Sheets (Google's spreadsheet program), Google Forms (Google's web form service), and Google Slides, (Google's presentation program). Users can also upload files to Google Drive, including photos, videos, PDFs, and text documents, until they hit the storage limit. Users can set up their personal computer or mobile phone to automatically back up files to their Google Drive Account. Each user gets 15 gigabytes of space for free on servers controlled by Google and may purchase more through a subscription plan called Google One. In

addition, Google Drive allows users to share their stored files and documents with up to 100 people and grant those with access the ability to edit or comment. Google maintains a record of who made changes when to documents edited in Google productivity applications. Documents shared with a user are saved in their Google Drive in a folder called “Shared with me.” Google preserves files stored in Google Drive indefinitely, unless the user deletes them. Android device users can also use Google Drive to backup certain data from their device. Android backups on Google Drive may include mobile application data, device settings, file downloads, and SMS messages. If a user subscribes to Google’s cloud storage service, Google One, they can opt to backup all the data from their device to Google Drive.

- e. **Photos:** Google offers a cloud-based photo and video storage service called Google Photos. Users can share or receive photos and videos with others. Users have the option to sync their mobile phone or device photos to Google Photos. Google preserves files stored in Google Photos indefinitely, unless the user deletes them.
- f. **Location history:** Google collects and retains data about the location at which Google Account services are accessed from any mobile device, as well as the periodic location of Android devices while they are in use. This location data can derive from a range of sources, including GPS data, Wi-Fi access points, cell-site locations, geolocation of IP addresses, sensor data, user searches, and Bluetooth beacons within range of the device.

According to Google, this location data may be associated with the Google Account signed-in or registered to the device when Location Services are activated on the device and the user has enabled certain global settings for their Google Account, such as Location History or Web & App Activity tracking. The data retained may be both precision location data, like latitude and longitude coordinates derived from GPS, and inferential location data, such as the inference that a Google Account is in New York because it conducts a series of searches about places to eat in New York and directions from one New York location to another. Precision location data is typically stored by Google in an account's Location History and is assigned a latitude-longitude coordinate with a meter radius margin of error. Inferential data is stored with an account's Web & App Activity. Google maintains these records indefinitely for accounts created before June 2020, unless the user deletes it or opts to automatically delete their Location History and Web & App Activity after three or eighteen months. Accounts created after June 2020 auto-delete Location History after eighteen months unless the user affirmatively changes the retention setting to indefinite retention or auto-deletion at three months.

- g. **Chrome and My Activity:** Google offers a free web browser service called Google Chrome which facilitates access to the Internet. Chrome retains a record of a user's browsing history and allows users to save favorite sites as bookmarks for easy access. If a user is logged into their Google Account on Chrome and has the appropriate settings enabled, their

browsing history, bookmarks, and other browser settings may be saved to their Google Account in a record called My Activity. My Activity also collects and retains data about searches that users conduct within their own Google Account or using the Google Search service while logged into their Google Account, including voice queries made to the Google artificial intelligence-powered virtual assistant Google Assistant or commands made to Google Home products. Google also has the capacity to track the websites visited using its Google Chrome web browser service, applications used by Android users, ads clicked, and the use of Google applications by iPhone users. According to Google, this search, browsing, and application use history may be associated with a Google Account when the user is logged into their Google Account on the browser or device and certain global settings are enabled, such as Web & App Activity. Google Assistant and Google Home voice queries and commands may also be associated with the account if certain global settings are enabled, such as Voice & Audio Activity tracking. Google maintains these records indefinitely for accounts created before June 2020, unless the user deletes them or opts in to automatic deletion of their location history every three or eighteen months. Accounts created after June 2020 auto-delete Web & App Activity after eighteen months unless the user affirmatively changes the retention setting to indefinite retention or auto-deletion at three months.

- h. Google Play: Google Accounts can buy electronic media, like books, movies, and music, and mobile applications from the Google Play Store. Google Play records can include records of whether a particular application has been or is currently installed on a device. Users cannot delete records of Google Play transactions without deleting their entire Google Account.

14. Google integrates its various services to make it easier for Google Accounts to access the full Google suite of services. For example, users accessing their Google Account through their browser can toggle between Google Services via a toolbar displayed on the top of most Google service pages, including Gmail and Drive. Google Hangout, Meet, and Chat conversations pop up within the same browser window as Gmail. Attachments in Gmail are displayed with a button that allows the user to save the attachment directly to Google Drive. If someone shares a document with a Google Account user in Google Docs, the contact information for that individual will be saved in the user's Google Contacts. Google Voice voicemail transcripts and missed call notifications can be sent to a user's Gmail account. And if a user logs into their Google Account on the Chrome browser, their subsequent Chrome browser and Google Search activity is associated with that Google Account, depending on user settings.

15. When individuals register with Google for a Google Account, Google asks users to provide certain personal identifying information, including the user's full name, telephone number, birthday, and gender. If a user is paying for services, the user must also provide a physical address and means and source of payment.

16. Google typically retains and can provide certain transactional information about the creation and use of each account on its system. Google captures the date on which the account was created, the length of service, log-in times and durations, the types of services utilized by the Google Account, the status of the account (including whether the account is inactive or closed), the methods used to connect to the account (such as logging into the account via Google's website or using a mobile application), details about the devices used to access the account, and other log files that reflect usage of the account. In addition, Google keeps records of the Internet Protocol ("IP") addresses used to register the account and accept Google's terms of service, as well as the IP addresses associated with particular logins to the account. Because every device that connects to the Internet must use an IP address, IP address information can help to identify which computers or other devices were used to access the Google Account.

17. Google maintains the communications, files, and associated records for each service used by a Google Account on servers under its control. Even after a user deletes a communication or file from their Google Account, it may continue to be available on Google's servers for a certain period of time.

18. In my training and experience, evidence of who was using a Google account and from where, and evidence related to criminal activity of the kind described above, may be found in the files and records described above. This evidence may establish the "who, what, why, when, where, and how" of the criminal conduct under investigation, thus enabling the United States to establish and prove each element or, alternatively, to exclude the innocent from further suspicion. For example, evidence regarding who used and possessed the Target Phone and Target Account at particular

times and places would provide evidence as to the identity of the person who downloaded or saved the child sexual abuse materials on the Target Phone and Target Account. Similarly, location information could also be used to establish the identity of the person who downloaded the materials. Evidence regarding the way the child sexual abuse materials were saved to the Target Phone and Account would be relevant in establishing the knowledge and intent of Rembert in possessing the materials.

19. Based on my training and experience, messages, emails, voicemails, photos, videos, documents, and internet searches are often created and used in furtherance of criminal activity, including to communicate and facilitate the offenses under investigation. Thus, stored communications and files connected to a Google Account may provide direct evidence of the offenses under investigation. For example, stored videos and images may constitute child pornography, the possession of which is an offense. Further, stored communications may provide evidence of how such child pornography materials were obtained, and whether they were solicited or distributed. Such evidence may also establish the possessor's knowledge and intent with regards to possession of the materials.

20. In addition, the user's account activity, logs, stored electronic communications, and other data retained by Google can indicate who has used or controlled the account. This "user attribution" evidence is analogous to the search for "indicia of occupancy" while executing a search warrant at a residence. For example, subscriber information, email and messaging logs, documents, and photos and videos (and the data associated with the foregoing, such as geo-location, date and time) may be evidence of who used or controlled the account at a relevant time. As an example,

because every device has unique hardware and software identifiers, and because every device that connects to the Internet must use an IP address, IP address and device identifier information can help to identify which computers or other devices were used to access the account. Such information also allows investigators to understand the geographic and chronological context of access, use, and events relating to the crime under investigation.

21. Account activity may also provide relevant insight into the account owner's state of mind as it relates to the offenses under investigation. For example, information on the account may indicate the owner's motive and intent to commit a crime (*e.g.*, information indicating a plan to commit a crime), or consciousness of guilt (*e.g.*, deleting account information in an effort to conceal evidence from law enforcement).

22. Other information connected to the use of a Google account may lead to the discovery of additional evidence. For example, the apps downloaded from the Google Play store may reveal services used in furtherance of the crimes under investigation or services used to communicate with co-conspirators.

23. Therefore, Google's servers are likely to contain stored electronic communications and information concerning subscribers and their use of Google services. In my training and experience, such information may constitute evidence of the crimes under investigation including information that can be used to identify the account's user or users.

CONCLUSION

24. Based on the forgoing, I request that the Court issue the proposed search warrant.

25. Pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 2703(g), the presence of a law enforcement officer is not required for the service or execution of this warrant. The government will execute this warrant by serving the warrant on Google. Because the warrant will be served on Google, who will then compile the requested records at a time convenient to it, reasonable cause exists to permit the execution of the requested warrant at any time in the day or night.

Respectfully submitted,




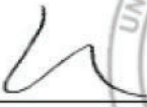
David Fife, Special Agent
Homeland Security Investigations

Sworn to telephonically and signed
electronically in accordance with the
requirements of Rule 4.1 of the Federal Rules
of Criminal Procedures

Date: Oct 02 2024

City and state: Portland, Maine




Judge's signature
Karen Frink Wolf, U.S. Magistrate Judge
Printed name and title